

Message Text

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TOSEC 298

E. O. 11652: N/ A
TAGS: PINT, JM
SUBJ: THE CIRCUS COMES HOME

FOL SENT ACTION SECSTATE WASHDC INFO BRIDGETOWN, GEORGETOWN,
PORT OF SPAIN, CINCLANT NORVA MAY 21, 1973 FROM KINGSTON
REPEATED TO YOU QUOTE

CONFIDENTIAL KINGSTON 1668

CINCLANT FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: N/ A
TAGS: PINT, JM
SUBJ: THE CIRCUS COMES HOME

REF: A. KINGSTON 1638; B. KINGSTON 1584

1. SUMMARY: MANLEY STRIKES BACK AT THE OPPOSITION AT THE LARGEST
POLITICAL RALLY SINCE THE ELECTION. THE NEW DIRECTIONS OF PNP
POLICY APPEAR INCREASINGLY OMINOUS TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, BUT
THE GOVERNMENT APPEARS DETERMINED TO SEE THEM THROUGH. THERE MAY
BE INCREASING GOVERNMENT PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMY. END SUMMARY.
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2. SMARTING FROM THE NATIONWIDE AND OPPOSITION CRITICISM OF HIS
PROPERTY TAX AND EDUCATION POLICIES, THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE
PNP STAGED THE LARGEST AND MOST EMOTION FILLED POLITICAL RALLY
SINCE THE 1972 GENERAL ELECTION ON THE EVENING OF MAY 16. THE
MEETING, ATTENDED BY SOME 13 OR 14,000 (35,000 IN THE WORDS OF THE

PM), WAS HELD AT THE NORMAN MANLEY MONUMENT IN THE HEART OF THE PRIME MINISTER' S OWN CENTRAL KINGSTON CONSTITUENCY. THE CONSTITUENCY RALLY IS THE LATEST IN A SERIES OF POLITICAL PROMOTIONS - " MEET THE PEOPLE" AND " OPERATION GROW" - THAT HAVE BEEN HELD THROUGHOOUT JAMAICA SINCE LAST FALL.

3. THE PRIME MINISTER' S ARRIVAL WAS PRECEDED BY SPEECHES BY MANY OF THE PARTY' S LIBERAL ELEMENTS: MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROSE LEON; MINISTER OF STATE DUDLEY THOMPSON; PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH MAVIS GILMORE; MINISTER OF HEALTH KEN MCNEILL AND MINISTER OF HOUSING TONY SPALDING. EACH SPEAKER HAD A DISTINCTIVE MESSAGE, BUT THE THRUST OF THE SPEECHES, DELIVERED AT TIMES SUCCESSFULLY WITH GREAT EMOTION,

WAS THAT THE LANDED

AND BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENT COULD NOT STAND IN THE WAY OF THE PROGRESS ENVISAGED IN THE FORM OF THE NEW PROPERTY TAXES AND THE GOVERNMENT' S EDUCATION SCHEME. THOMPSON WENT SO FAR AS TO DESCRIBE THE GOVERNMENT' S PROGRAMS AS " SOCIALISM" AND MADE LIBERAL USE OF HIS NEW TIME- WORN JINGLE - " POWER TO THE PEOPLE." SPALDING DECRINED THE EFFORTS OF THE OPPOSITION, THE JAMAICAN MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION, AND THE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE TO SQUASH THE LAND- TAX SCHEME AND HEAPED ABUSE ON RESIDENTS OF WELL- KNOWN WEALTHY RESIDENTIAL AREAS FOR RESISTING HIGHER TAXATION. HE EVEN CITED THE LEADERS OF THE JMA AND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BY NAME, AND ATTACKED THE GLEANER AS THE LEADER IN THE ATTACK ON THE GOVERNMENT. KEN MCNEILL HINTED THAT THE ACTIONS WHICH LED TO SEAGA' S REVELATION OF A PURPORTED CABINET BAUXITE SCHEME (KINGSTON 1622) MIGHT INVOLVE THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT. HE DID NOT DENY THE SUBSTANCE.

4. SPALDING' S SPEECH WAS INTERRUPTED MIDWAY BY THE ARRIVAL OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND MRS. MANLEY, WHO WERE GREETED BY LENGTHY CHEERING AND APPLAUSE. THE ARRIVAL WAS ALSO SYMBOLICALLY GREETED BY WHAT APPEARED TO MOST SPECTATORS TO BE A METEORITE OFF IN THE DISTANCE IN THE NIGHT SKY. MANLEY CARRIED OTHER SYMBOLS AS WELL. HE WAS DRESSED IN AN AFRICAN SHIRT WITH A MEDALLION, AND HE CARRIED

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HIS FAMOUS " ROD OF CORRECTION."

5. AFTER THE CHEERING SETTLED DOWN AND SEVERAL PARTY SONGS WERE SUNG BY THE CONSTITUENCY CLOWN, THE PRIME MINISTER DELIVERED A 45 MINUTE JUSTIFICATION OF HIS POLICIES, INTERRUPTING IT AT INTERVALS TO ASK, " IF I AM WRONG, TELL ME I' M WRONG." HIS MAIN TARGETS WERE THE OPPOSITION TO THE EDUCATION SCHEME - " NO WAY WILL THEY KEEP ME FROM EDUCATING MY PEOPLE" - AND THE PROPERTY TAX SCHEME. THE SPEECH WAS SPRINKLED WITH LIBERAL WAVING OF HIS " ROD OF CORRECTION." MANLEY REHASHED HIS FAMILIAR EMPHASIS ON SELF- HELP, ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE AND HARD WORK, LIBERALLY STRESSING HIS OWN WILLINGNESS TO TAKE OFF HIS SHIRT AND WORK IN THE FIELDS. HE AVOIDED DIRECT ATTACKS ON INDIVIDUAL GROUPS, CALLING ALL TO BECOME HIS BROTHERS IN LOVE (THE DIRECT ATTACKS HAD BEEN ADEQUATELY DELIVERED BY HIS SUBORDINATES). MANLEY PLACED MORE THAN USU-

AL RELIANCE ON THE DEITY DURING HIS DELIVERY, CALLING UPON THE PEOPLE TO " HELP HIM BUILD GOD' S HOUSE." (OTHER SPEAKERS HAD LAIN THE GROUND WORK BY EMPHASIZING THAT " GOD HAD SENT MANLEY TO LEAD HIS PEOPLE OUT OF THE DARKNESS.") IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH THIS THE RICH COULD AFFORD TO PAY SOME MORE TAXES.

6. COMMENT: THE DECISION TO HOLD THE RALLY AT THIS TIME AND SYMBOLIC PLACE WAS DICTATED BY SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN UNDER MOUNTING CRITICISM IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS FOR ITS BUDGET, TAXATION AND EDUCATION POLICIES, AND MANLEY HAS PERSONALLY FELT THAT PRESSURE. HE AND HIS PARTY HAVE BEEN UNABLE EFFECTIVELY TO ANSWER THE SUBSTANCE OF THE CRITICISM AND HAVE RESORTED TO WINDOW- DRESSING AND FURTHER PROMISES, WHICH HAVE LED ONLY TO FURTHER CREDIBILITY DIFFICULTIES. THE RETURN TO CENTRAL KINGSTON AND THE NORMAN MANLEY STATUE, THEREFORE, WAS A RETURN TO THE WELL- SPRING OF MANLEY' S POLITICAL SUPPORT (CENTRAL KINGSTON) AND POLITICAL INSPIRATION AND PHILOSOPHY (THE MANLEY STATUE). HE NEEDED THE DISPLAY OF CONFIDENCE AND CONTINUITY TO SUSTAIN HIMSELF DURING THESE DIFFICULT TIMES, AND WHAT BETTER SETTING? BY THE END OF THE EVENING, THE CROWD WOULD HAVE FOLLOWED MANLEY INTO THE OCEAN - OR THE WEALTHY SUBURBS*

7. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR CALLED ON MANLEY BEFORE THE POLITICAL RALLY TO DISCUSS THE SECRETARY' S FORTHCOMING VISIT, THE PM WAS UNUSUALLY WOUND UP. HE WAS DISTRESSED BY THE PERFORMANCE OF HIS MINISTERS AND THEIR STAFFS, ESPECIALLY SO WITH FINMIN COORE WHO
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APPARENTLY HAD FAILED TO DO HIS HOMEWORK ON THE PROPERTY TAX PROGRAM AND WITH THE MINISTRY OF LABOR WHICH HAD PLUNGED AHEAD WITH HIS WORK PERMIT TAX WITHOUT INVESTIGATING ALL OF ITS IMPLICATIIONS. HE WAS, THEREFORE, READY FOR A FIGHT AND FOR A HIGHLY KEYED- UP PERFORMANCE.

8. THE OVERALL TENOR OF THE RALLY WAS " SOAK THE RICH" - A THEME WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER AVOIDS BUT WHICH THE LESSER SPEAKERS MAKE NO ATTEMPT TO HIDE. THOMPSON, SPALDING, AND MCNEILL CAME ON ESPECIALLY STRONG ON THIS ANGLE, AND THEY WERE SPEAKING BEFORE A CONGENIAL GROUP. THOMPSON' S UTTERANCE OF SOCIALISM - HERETOFORE A BAD POLITICAL BUZZ WORD IN JAMAICA WAS THE FIRST IN OUR RECOLLECTION, AND, WHILE NOTHING MORE THAN AN EXPRESSION AT A POLITICAL RALLY AT THIS POINT, IT MAY BE A PORTENT OF HIS DEVELOPING PUBLIC STANCE.

9. WHETHER THE ABSENCE OF TELEVISION AND RADIO CAMERAS AND MICRO- PHONES WAS BY DESIGN OR NOT IS UNKNOWN. IT IS PROBABLY JUST AS WELL THAT THEY WERE NOT THERE, HOWEVER, AS DIRECT REPORTING OF WEDNESDAY NIGHT' S CIRCUS COULD HARDLY ENCOURAGE CONFIDENCE IN THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF JAMAICA' S INCREASINGLY SUSPICIOUS MIDDLE CLASS AND BUSINESS COMMUNITY.

10. WHILE THE NORTH PARADE RALLY MIGHT OT BE A WATERSHED IN THE

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PNP PHILOSOPHY AND PROGRAM, THE DETERMINATION TO PURSUE THE PROPERTY TAX SCHEME, COME WHAT MAY, AND TO PROCEED WITH THE EDUCATION SCHEME, COUPLED WITH SUBTLE REFERENCES TO ASSURING THE SUPPLIES OF FLOUR, ANIMAL FEED, AND CONDENSED MILK, STRONGLY INDICATE THAT THIS GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT SHY AWAY FROM MUCH MORE EXTENSIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE ECONOMY. EACH MOVE IN CONTROLLING PRICES, SUBSIDIZING COSTS, AND PUBLICLY ATTACKING "RAPACIOUS" DISTRIBUTORS SEEMS TO DEMAND THE NEXT STEP. WHERE THE TREADMILL WILL LEAD IS ANYBODY'S GUESS AT THIS MOMENT.
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